

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-26 are in this application. Claims 3-6, 8-19 and 24-26 have been withdrawn as the result of an earlier election requirement. Claims 1 and 2 have been rejected. Claims 7 and 20-23 are objected to, however, the Examiner has acknowledged that claims 7 and 20-23 are directed to allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

§ 102(b) Rejections

The Examiner has rejected claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. 102 (b) as being anticipated by Caperton, Jr. (US 3,660,903). The Examiner's assertion is respectfully traversed.

While continuing to traverse the Examiner's rejections, the Applicant has, in order to expedite the prosecution, chosen to amend claim 1, as suggested by the Examiner, so as to overcome the Examiner's objections and emphasize distinguishing features of the present invention over the cited prior art. Claim 1 now contains the amendments suggested by the Examiner and the phrase a first surface of has been added to section (a) of claim 1; and the phrases a second surface of and wherein said first surface and said second surface are structurally connected to each other have been added to section (b) of claim 1.

The Applicant notes that it should be understood that neither the first nor the second surface need be planar, as exemplified in the embodiment of Figure 19a. The Applicant further notes that it should be understood that the structural connection between the first and the second surfaces need not be interlocking, as exemplified by the abutting association, or connection, between elements 24 and 32 in the embodiment of Figure 3.

Amended independent claim 1 now features the language suggested by the Examiner in order to overcome the Examiner's rejections on § 102(b) grounds.

Objections

The Examiner has objected to claims 7 and 20-23 as being based on a rejected base claim. The Examiner has noted that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim.

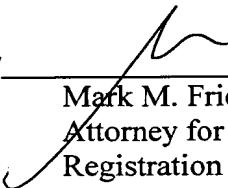
In view of the discussion above in the context of the § 102(b) rejections, the Applicant submits that the base claim from which these claims depend is now allowable, making claims 7 and 20-23 allowable in their present form.

In view of the above amendments and remarks it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1, and hence dependent claims 2, 7 and 20-23, are in condition for allowance. Further, the Applicant respectfully requests consideration of withdrawn claims 3-6, 8-19 and 24-26 which relate to non-elected species, since they depend from a base claim now believed to be allowable. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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